

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2364

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

USIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 15539

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH: PRIME MINISTER AND FONMIN REITERATE INDIAN
CONCERNS IN NON-BELLIGERANT TERMS

REF: NEW DELHI 15474

1. THE PRESS NOVEMBER 21 PROMINENTLY REPORTS PRIME
MINISTER GANDHI'S STATEMENT AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN GANGTOK
(SIKKIM) NOVEMBER 20 THAT INDIA CANNOT REMAIN UNCONCERNED
ABOUT THE HAPPENINGS IN BANGLADESH. SHE ALSO SAID: "QUITE

FRANKLY I DO NOT KNOW WHAT REALLY IS THE SITUATION THERE.
I DO NOT THINK ANYBODY KNOWS. WE HAD RECEIVED SOME REPORTS.
NOT THAT THESE REPORTS WERE INCOMPLETE, BUT IT APPEARED
THAT THE SITUATION HAD NOT STABILIZED." SHE DESCRIBED AS
HYPOTHETICAL A QUESTION ABOUT WHAT INDIAN WOULD DO IN CASE
THERE WAS A CALL FOR HELP FROM BANGLADESH. "IF THERE IS
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A CALL, IT IS A MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED THEN. I DO NOT

THINK WE CAN CONSIDER IT AT THIS MOMENT. IT SEEMS TO BE A PROBLEM TO BE SETTLED BY THEMSELVES." SHE REPORTEDLY RULED OUT ANY DANGER TO INDIA ALONG ITS NORTHEASTERN BORDER AS A RESULT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH. "I DON'T THINK INDIA'S BORDER WOULD BE EXPOSED TO ANY TROUBLE AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD REMAIN SAFE." SHE WISHED BANGLADESH AND ITS PEOPLE WELL AND URGED THEM TO "SOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS."

2. MEETING WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS NOVEMBER 20, FOREIGN MINISTER Y.B. CHAVAN SAID INDIA WANTED TO "KEEP UP" GOOD RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH. THE MINISTER TOLD THE MPS: "IF THEY ALSO CONTINUE GOOD NEIGHBORLY ATTITUDE AND DO NOT DEVIATE FROM IT UNDER EXTERNAL INFLUENCE, THERE IS NO REASON WHY RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH SHOULD NOT CONTINUE TO BE GOOD." CHAVAN ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF "MINORITIES" IN BANGLADESH. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT THE MEETING FOCUSED ON THE FLUIDITY OF THE SITUATION IN BANGLADESH.

3. THE SITUATION IN CHITTAGONG IS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY BY THE NOVEMBER 21 DELHI PRESS. TWO SECTIONS OF THE ARMY ARE SAID TO BE CLASHING IN THE CANTONMENT AND THERE REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN "ENCOUNTERS" BETWEEN THE ARMY AND NAVY IN THE PORT. A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF SHEIKH MUJIB, MANIK CHOWDHURY, WHO ALLEGEDLY WAS INVOLVED IN THE AGARTALA CONSPIRACY CASE ALONG WITH THE SHEIKH, IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN MURDERED BY ARMY ELEMENTS LOYAL TO MAJOR GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN. PROMINENT SOCIALIST LEADERS AND STUDENT AND YOUTH LEADERS ARE ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED OR GONE UNDERGROUND.

4. THE CPI'S DAILY "PATRIOT" IN A CALCUTTA-DATED LINE STORY REPORTS THAT ENLISTED MEN IN THE BANGLADESH ARMY HAVE FORCED THE MARSHALL LAW ADMINISTRATORS TO WITHDRAW THEIR ORDER FOR ADDITIONAL ARMY RECRUITMENT. THE ENLISTED MEN REPORTEDLY WERE CONCERNED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN INTENSIVE SCREENING OF THE RANKS FOLLOWING THE INDUCTION OF NEW MEN. "PATRIOT" ALSO REPORTS THAT FORMER

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PRESIDENT KHANDAKER MOSHTAQUE AHMED IS ATTEMPTING TO FORM HIS OWN POLITICAL PARTY. HE IS SAID TO BE MEETING WITH PERSONS WHO WERE "OPPOSED TO THE LIBERATION OF BANGLADESH."

5. IN REFTEL WE REPORTED THE APPEAL OF THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION IN DELHI FOR U.S. SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY. WE HAVE NOW LEARNED THAT HE MADE A SIMILAR APPEAL TO THE

FRG EMBASSY AND PERHAPS TO OTHERS.

6. ACCORDING TO FRG EMBOFF, MRS. GANDHI COMMENTED TO A GROUP OF WEST GERMAN PARLIAMENTARIANS NOVEMBER 18 THAT SHE HAD CONSIDERED RESIGNING IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ALLAHABAD VERDICT. BUT, SHE SAID, HER SUCCESSOR WOULD PROBABLY HAVE HAD A SHORT TENURE SINCE ONE MUST LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENED IN BANGLADESH.

7. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY RECENT EVENTS IN BANGLADESH COULD NOT HAVE HAD ANY RELEVANCE TO MRS. GANDHI'S THOUGHT PROCESSES IN JUNE. WHAT IS INTERESTING IS THAT IN RETROSPECT SHE APPEARS TO BE JUSTIFYING THE NECESSITY OF HAVING DONE WHAT SHE DID BECAUSE OF AN IMPLIED THREAT OF VIOLENCE, REBELLION, AND MUTINY AGAINST ANY POTENTIAL POLITICAL SUCCESSOR TO HER IN THE PRE-EMERGENCY ENVIRONMENT. SHE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE ARMY OR POLICE BUT IT SEEMS BY IMPLICATION TO HAVE BEEN IN HER MIND.
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